

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AND ITS MENTAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES AMONG FEMALES

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KEYWORDS

Workplace Harassment,
Mental Health, Females

CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Farooq, H., & Farooq, T. (2026). Relationship between workplace harassment and its mental health consequences among females. Pakistan Journal of Positive Psychology, 3(3), 1-6.

ARTICLE DETAILS:

Received on 05 Jan, 2026

Accepted on 01 Feb, 2026

Published on 25 Jun, 2026

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the relationship between workplace harassment and its mental health consequences among females. It is hypothesized that there will be a relationship between workplace harassment and its mental health consequences among females. Two questionnaires were used to find out the relationship between workplace harassment and its mental health consequences. The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) was used to assess mental health consequences. The Workplace Harassment questionnaire by Myeongjun et al. (2016) was used to assess workplace harassment among working women. A sample of 150 working women was collected through purposive sampling techniques. Informed consent was presented to participants. Reliability of these scales was assessed at first. The statistical procedure was carried out by SPSS. Linear regression, Pearson correlation, T-tests, and ANOVAs were applied to find out the results. Results revealed that workplace harassment has negative impacts on mental health among working women. Findings have implications in mental health settings.

I. INTRODUCTION

Harassment among women at workplace can feel traumatic and result in symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety. Harassment among women at workplace can cause numerous mental health consequence. Harassment is defined as "any conduct based on age, disability, HIV status, domestic circumstances, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, color, language, religion, political, trade union, or other opinion or belief, national or social origin, association with a minority, property, birth, or other status that is unfavorable to the harassed individual or groups of employees". Women who are victims of workplace harassment suffer from depression or psychosomatic symptoms. Harassment lowers self-esteem, self-confidence, and psychological well-being and increases the risk of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Willness et al., 2007). Pakistan is a traditional nation, and there is no tendency that allows women to leave the house to find work. The females who move at employment, we frequently encounter bleak circumstances. Due to their frequent contact with males, nurses frequently encounter sexual harassment from patients, male subordinates, and doctors in addition to their bosses and doctors. Literature has shown a variety of difficulties women experience when participating in the workforce. Major challenges such as uneven pay, discrimination, security concerns, sexual harassment, and inadequate maternity leave, poor family assistance, a male-dominated culture, and unwelcome or inappropriate behavior by male coworkers were also noted (Saleem et al., 2021).

When an unwanted person or persons are present in the same company, employees might stress about sexual harassment on a regular basis. Sexual harassment causes victims to feel anxious, which makes them avoid going to work, get sick, perform poorly, or even try to leave that business. The majority of the time, this results in unabated unemployment as well as both short- and long-term losses for the companies. The harassed person might also feel depressed, suffer severe emotional retribution, and run into financial trouble. The cases of abuse and harassment in sports were compiled by (Amanat, 2025; Sarwar, 2022). Sexual assault and harassment have detrimental effects on the victim, their team, and the general well-being and integrity of sport. These effects are both physical and psychological (Ahmad, 2020) investigated the prevalence of street harassment and its socio-psychological impacts on women living in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Street pestering of women violates their safety and is a form of gender violence. By making them feel exposed and uneasy in public, you violate their respect. The conclusions have been compiled on the basis of empirical assessments of the viewpoints of 200 female students from eight various universities in Islamabad, Pakistan. The study says that objectification, street harassment, and violence against women are unavoidable occurrences in Pakistan. In Pakistan, despite the fact that they make up more than half of the population, women are still subjected to a patriarchal culture that relies on harassing, discriminating against, and oppressing them in both public and private spheres.

By studying its prevalence and impact, we can advocate for policies and interventions to protect women's rights and ensure equal opportunities for all. Workplace harassment can have severe mental health consequences for victims, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even suicidal thoughts. Understanding these consequences is crucial for developing support systems and interventions to mitigate harm and promote mental well-being. Research on harassment can inform the development of effective legal frameworks and workplace policies to prevent and address such behavior. This includes implementing anti-harassment training programs, establishing reporting mechanisms, and ensuring appropriate disciplinary actions for perpetrators. Studying harassment can contribute to broader societal shifts in attitudes and behaviors towards gender equality and respect in the workplace. By raising awareness of the prevalence and impact of harassment, we can foster a culture of accountability, respect, and inclusivity. Ultimately, studying harassment allows us to identify risk factors and protective factors that influence its occurrence and impact. This knowledge is essential for developing targeted prevention strategies and effective interventions to support victims and create safer work environments for all employees. So present study will be an attempt to bridge these gaps.

II. METHOD

Participants

To assess the relationship between mental health problem, physical impairments and help seeking behavior among Cross-sectional Correlational research design was employed to carry out current study. It is due to correlational nature of purposed objectives and hypotheses. A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit the sample. As, this strategy is recommended by the literature. When study have some inclusion and exclusion criteria (Panacek & Thompson, 2007). The study's participants were working women who were recruited from colleges and rehabilitation facilities. 150 females make up the sample size or participants chosen for this study. The range of ages was 18 to 60. Females suffering from harassment in workplace were included in the present study. Females who face mental health issues due to harassment in workplace were included in the present study. Females who face harassment outside workplace were not included in this study. Females in this study who have experienced other forms of physical abuse were excluded from this study. Females under the age of 18 who experience harassment were not included in this study. Females with mental disorder were not include in this study.

Measures

Following measurement scales used for data collection. **[1]** Workplace Harassment Questionnaire. This scale was developed by Myeongjun Lee et al. (2016). It is 20 items questionnaire which is used to assess the workplace harassment. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale is 0.93. Scoring of this questionnaire was done by using 5-point Likert scale. **[2]** Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale. This scale was developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). The DASS is a 42-item self-report instrument designed to measure the three related negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Each scale contains 14 items, divided into 2-5 items with similar content.

The depression scale assesses dysphoria, hopelessness, devaluation of life, Self-deprecation, lack of interest, anhedonia and inertia. The anxiety scale assesses autonomic arousal, skeletal muscles effects, situational anxiety and subjective experience of anxious effect. The stress scale is sensitive to level of chronic non-specific arousal. It assesses difficulty relaxing, nervous arousal and being easily upset / agitated, irritable / over-reactive and impatient. The scoring of the scale is 4-point Likert scale.

Procedure

After getting approval from Department of Psychology and permission to conduct research, letters were signed by Department of Psychology explaining the purpose of the research and request for the permission of the data collection. The data was collected from working women. The nature and the purpose of the study was explained by the researcher before taking the written consent from those who met the said criteria for this research and their willingness to participate as well. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire with complete honesty and attentions. Participants were assured about the confidentiality of their response as well as their right to participate as well. Participants will be asked to complete the questionnaire with complete honesty and attentions. Participants were assured about the confidentiality of their responses as well as their right to withdraw in case of inconvenience. Participants were instructed fill all the items of questionnaire. SPSS version 20 was used for performing statistical analysis. Then reliability assessment of measures was checked through Cronbach's alpha. Next, the researcher assessed the main objective of the study. Pearson product moment correlation was used to assess the relationship among variables. Finally, the linear regression analysis was run to find out the prediction among variables.

III. RESULTS

Table I: Psychometric Properties of Scale

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	α
Workplace Harassment	33.39	8.78	23-51	.87
Mental Health Consequences	31.15	12.78	8-52	.93
Depression	10.11	3.76	3-15	.69
Anxiety	9.48	4.72	3-18	.84
Stress	11.56	4.65	2-19	.84

Table 1 shows psychometric properties of the scales. Results show that all scales and subscales have satisfactory alpha reliability coefficients (range from 0.69 to 0.93).

Table II: Pearson Correlation between Workplace Harassment and Mental Health Consequences among Females

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Workplace Harassment	--	.71**	.63**	.77**	.67**
2. Mental Health Consequences		--	.97**	.95**	.98**
3. Depression			--	.88**	.97**
4. Anxiety				--	.90**
5. Stress					--

** $p < .01$

Table 2 shows relationship between workplace harassment and mental health consequences among females. Results showed that workplace harassment has significant positive relationship with mental health consequences $r(118) = .71, p < .01$, depression $r(118) = .63, p < .01$, anxiety $r(118) = .77, p < .01$, and stress $r(118) = .67, p < .01$. Mental health consequences has significant positive relationship with depression $r(118) = .97, p < .01$, anxiety $r(118) = .95, p < .01$, and stress $r(118) = .98, p < .01$. Depression has significant positive relationship with anxiety $r(118) = .88, p < .01$, and stress $r(118) = .97, p < .01$. Anxiety has significant positive relationship with stress $r(118) = .90, p < .01$. Therefore, it was found that there was positive relationship between workplace harassment and negative mental health consequences among females.

Table III: Workplace Harassment as a Predictor of Depression among Females

Predictor	Depression		Anxiety		Stress	
	B	SE	4.43*	.96	.37	1.10
(Constant)	1.05	.94	.41*	.02	.35*	.03
Workplace Harassment	.27*	.02	.601		.456	
R^2	.400					

* $p < .01$

Table 3 shows workplace harassment as a predictor of depression among females. The R^2 values show 40% variance in the outcome variable by the predictor workplace harassment. Results show that workplace harassment significantly positively predicted depression among females $F(1, 118) = 98.70, p < .01$. Table shows workplace harassment as a predictor of anxiety among females. The R^2 values show 60.1% variance in the outcome variable by the predictor workplace harassment. Results show that workplace harassment significantly positively predicted anxiety among females $F(1, 118) = 222.77, p < .01$. Table shows workplace harassment as a predictor of stress among females. The R^2 values show 45.6% variance in the outcome variable by the predictor workplace harassment. Results show that workplace harassment significantly positively predicted stress among females $F(1, 118) = 124.00, p < .01$. Therefore, from the findings revealed that workplace harassment has effect on mental health consequences among females.

IV.DISCUSSION

The primary aim to conduct this study was to know relationship between workplace harassment and its mental health consequences among females. The findings show the measures' psychometric characteristics as well as those of the associated variables they were designed to evaluate, including workplace harassment. The acceptable alpha reliability coefficients, which range from 0.69 to 0.93, show that the scales and subscales have internal consistency. These coefficients imply that each scale's items accurately reflect the same underlying concept. Greater reliability is indicated by a higher alpha coefficient, which suggests that the scales' items consistently capture the variance in the construct being assessed. The strong reliability coefficients in this study increase the validity of the measurements and corroborate the findings' veracity. The findings clearly show a large positive correlation between workplace harassment and negative effects on females' mental health. The Pearson correlation show a significant positive relationship between workplace harassment and stress, depression, and anxiety as well as a positive correlation with depression. When workplace harassment incidents rise, female employees' reported levels of stress, anxiety, and depression also rise (Rospenda et al., 2008). The findings of this study offer empirical support for the hypothesis that workplace harassment negatively affects women's mental health. The strong positive relationships between the effects of workplace harassment on mental health and these effects themselves, as well as between them, have verified this notion.

Women are more likely than males to encounter both sexual and generic workplace harassment, according to a research by Fitzgerald et al. (2017). According to Table 4, workplace harassment has a significant predictive impact on the outcomes for females' mental health. The findings further show that workplace harassment significantly and positively predicts adverse effects on females' mental health. This indicates that there is a comparable rise in the reported mental health effects among female employees when workplace harassment incidents rise. For women, harassment can impede the advancement of their careers. Due to their concern about ongoing harassment or stigmatization, victims can be less inclined to pursue promotions or leadership positions (Schmidt et al., 2019). Findings shows that there was a strong link between workplace harassment and the following onset of depression symptoms in female employees. This indicates that workplace harassment has a measurable effect on estimating the risk that female employees may experience depressive symptoms. Harassment frequently leads to psychological distress, which shows out as powerlessness, rage, and frustration. According to Schneider et al. (2017), these feelings can damage one's capacity to operate well and weaken one's sense of self-worth. The strong correlations between workplace harassment and a variety of outcomes related to mental health serve as evidence of the interconnectedness of these factors. These results support the idea that workplace harassment has a significant impact on how female employees' mental health develops.

V. CONCLUSION

The study provided a thorough investigation of the complicated dynamics of workplace harassment and its significant effects on the mental health of female employees. The study offered helpful insights into the links between workplace harassment, mental health repercussions, and many demographic characteristics through a comprehensive review of several tables. The findings of this study have implications for organizations as well as individuals, highlighting the urgent need for preventative steps to reduce the negative impacts of workplace harassment. The first theory, which proposed a positive relationship between workplace harassment and negative impacts on female mental health, received significant acceptance. According to the data, there is a strong association between workplace harassment and higher than average levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. This result highlights the need of organizations to address workplace harassment, which is a significant cause of problems with female employees' mental health. The findings in provide significant proof in favor of the second hypothesis, which claims that workplace harassment has negative effects on females' mental health. The strong predictive associations shown in these tables highlight how much workplace harassment affects the mental health of female employees. Thus, organizations are required to implement complete methods that not only stop harassment but also give individuals who are impacted priority mental health care.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

The author received no funding from any organizations.

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